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SENSITIVE

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [EAGR](#) [ENRG](#) [TD](#)

SUBJECT: THE OTHER SUMMIT: PRIME MINISTER MANNING OFFICIALY LAUNCHES  
THE COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT MEETING PROCESS

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Prime Minister Manning officially launched on June 30 the process that will lead to Port of Spain hosting the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in November 2009. In speaking of CHOGM, Manning posited that food security and energy prices would be central focus of the meeting. He also raised related environmental concerns, including global warming. Manning's CHOGM rhetoric is in line with recent speeches he has given, including at the recent AACCLA event here and in other fora. Whether this portends greater weight given to these concerns in Summit of the Americas deliberations, or is merely the rhetorical flourish of the day, remains to be seen. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) While the USG is focused on the April 17-19, 2009 Summit of the Americas (SOA) meeting in Port of Spain, a parallel process is going on for a number of Commonwealth countries. Trinidad will host the CHOGM in November 2009, including an expected visit by the Queen. Our British colleagues are already planning for the event, intending to multiply the current size of their diplomat staff from two to fourteen to prepare for the event. The T&T Summit Secretariat also is in charge of the CHOGM meeting, though it gives the impression of not yet having fully focused on the latter event.

¶3. (SBU) In the CHOGM kickoff ceremony, attended by that organization's Secretary General Kamallesh Sharma, PM Manning stressed the responsibility of Commonwealth member states to meet world problems head on and for rich nations to "no longer...be excessive or wasteful." He spoke of the high price of energy, food scarcity and costs and global warming and the instability problems in these areas has and could produce. "Next year, here in Port of Spain, we must, therefore, issue a call for greater and urgent global action to save the planet and our civilization." He also added that the spiraling cost of energy threatened to throw the world into "a protracted global economic slowdown..." To counter high fuel costs, some nations are now considering ramping up nuclear power efforts, but "with this solution comes the threat of nuclear proliferation in a world that is increasingly concerned with terrorism." In an aside, Manning added that similar concerns would be raised at the SOA meeting.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: Though T&T is blessed with energy resources, rising food costs and overall inflation (largely driven by rapid spending of oil/gas revenues) are a concern here. Over the last several weeks, Manning has made several speeches where he has touched on themes enunciated to Commonwealth delegations. His Summit Coordinator, Luis Alberto Rodriguez, also has made some remarks along these lines. Despite the "greenness" of portions of his speech, and T&T being a top ten contributor to greenhouse gases in per capita terms, the GOTT also has made clear that it sees the burden of improving the world situation as falling on larger states. Climate change was high on the agenda for the last Commonwealth meeting in Uganda, where Manning reportedly took some knocks for not taking sides in the debate. The PM's most recent comments probably play well here and internationally, but so far, as regards, the SOA, we have seen the government and its Summit team largely taking measured stances.

